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Ministry of Health
Ministry of Agriculture and Lands

MEAT PRODUCERS GET FURTHER ASSISTANCE FOR LICENSING

VICTORIA – Small-scale meat producers are getting additional assistance with more than $3.8 million to build slaughterhouse capacity and bring them into compliance with the Ministry of Health's Meat Inspection Regulation.

"This funding is over and above the initial funding we provided to meat processors and communities through the Meat Transition Assistance Program in April 2006," said Health Minister George Abbott. "The purpose of the meat inspection regulation is to ensure that British Columbians can rely on a safe food supply and reduce health risks to a minimum."

The Meat Inspection Regulation was introduced in September 2004 and implemented provincewide on Sept. 30, 2007, to ensure that all British Columbians have the protection afforded by food safety standards no matter where they live in the province. In 2006, the Ministry of Health provided $5 million through the Meat Transition Assistance Program to assist producers in upgrading their abattoirs to comply with the new regulation. Today's announcement refreshes that fund and will assist producers in making upgrades to their facilities.

"We have worked closely with small producers and processors in rural and remote areas to support the viability of local food production and recognize that some still don't have ready access to small slaughter facilities," said Agriculture and Lands Minister Pat Bell. "With this funding, we want to help them obtain that capacity – our goal is to find flexible and practical solutions to support our agricultural communities in remaining secure, viable and competitive."

The number of provincially licensed slaughter plants has more than tripled between 2004 and 2007 and there are now 40 across the province (in addition to 13 federally registered slaughter plants serving the inter-provincial and export markets). Their size varies, including some small-scale operations that may slaughter only a few times in the year.

The Province has a category of "Class C" transitional licences for operators working towards obtaining a full licence. Under Class C, the processor's meat is labelled as uninspected and restricted to direct farm gate sales only – not for resale to retailers or restaurants.

The Meat Inspection Regulation under the BC Food Safety Act is designed to protect public health and promote public confidence in the Province's $22-billion-a-year agricultural food industry. The regulation creates a meat inspection system that will help to rapidly identify, track and eliminate food-borne risks to consumers.

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Since the mid-1960s, provincial licensing and inspection have been required in parts of the province including Vancouver, Victoria, Vernon, Abbotsford, the Sunshine Coast and the South Peace. Implementing the regulation provincewide ensures British Columbians are protected under meat food safety standards, no matter where they live in B.C.

Information on B.C.'s new Meat Inspection Regulation is available at:
www.health.gov.bc.ca/protect/meat_inspection.html

A map outlining the location of approved facilities is available at:
www.bccdc.org/downloads/pdf/fps/reports/Meat%20Plant%20Map%20Apr%202008%20-%20Public%20Version%20-%20Final.pdf

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